**Why are tornadoes considered among nature’s worst storms?**

**How does a tornado form?**

Imagine that you’re inside your home one stormy day. You sit and play a game as the howl of the wind grows louder and louder. You look out the window and see gray clouds darkening the sky. Raindrops and large chunks of hail strike the ground. Then, in an instant, the wind stops and the air suddenly becomes very, very still.

Don’t be fooled. The storm isn’t over. You will certainly know that when you hear a thunderous roar. It sounds like a train is right outside your window. Don’t look out now. It’s time to run for cover. That’s because a tall, funnel-shaped cloud has begun to stretch down to the ground. It twirls like a top and travels from side to side. It’s a tornado, and it’s one of the worst storms on Earth.

[](http://www.google.com/imgres?q=vertical+column+tornado&um=1&hl=en&sa=N&qscrl=1&nord=1&rlz=1T4ADSA_enUS454US454&biw=1441&bih=591&tbm=isch&tbnid=oRFK84wMwvCkHM:&imgrefurl=http://www.flickr.com/photos/jadydangel/1097126406/&docid=2Em87tia8QtMNM&imgurl=http://farm2.staticflickr.com/1378/1097126406_527a632a38_z.jpg&w=640&h=480&ei=ff_ZT4iKOoH46QGL_JjLAg&zoom=1&iact=hc&vpx=853&vpy=142&dur=546&hovh=194&hovw=259&tx=111&ty=116&sig=101789171514098841793&page=1&tbnh=126&tbnw=183&start=0&ndsp=24&ved=1t:429,r:5,s:0,i:89)

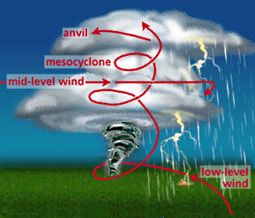
**In the photo above, whirling winds have formed a vertical column.**

[](http://www.google.com/imgres?q=vertical+column+tornado&um=1&hl=en&sa=N&qscrl=1&nord=1&rlz=1T4ADSA_enUS454US454&biw=1441&bih=591&tbm=isch&tbnid=1PPYMTA-fxBC7M:&imgrefurl=http://www.buzzle.com/articles/different-types-of-tornadoes.html&docid=bWb2MQU223hEGM&imgurl=http://www.buzzle.com/img/articleImages/273617-5312-55.jpg&w=350&h=233&ei=ff_ZT4iKOoH46QGL_JjLAg&zoom=1&iact=hc&vpx=368&vpy=148&dur=199&hovh=183&hovw=275&tx=92&ty=97&sig=101789171514098841793&page=1&tbnh=126&tbnw=169&start=0&ndsp=24&ved=1t:429,r:2,s:0,i:80)

**In this photo, the column of whirling wind has become tornado.**

**The Wind Up**

So how does such a deadly tornado form? First, as a storm develops, the wind changes direction and speed. Warm, moist air begins to swirl in the lower part of the atmosphere. Then rising air begins to tilt this swirling wind. Finally, the wind is no longer spread out horizontally across the ground but is spinning vertically from the ground up, looking like the drain of your bathtub when you let the water out. This whirling center, or vortex, of powerful wind is where tornadoes take shape.



**A tornado forms within the spinning column of air. The tornado extends down from the anvil at the top of the cloud. The bottom of the tornado skips along the ground and can cause great destruction.**